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This study examined division of child care, parenting roles, and parent-child relationship quality, both within and across same-sex couples. Analyses were carried out both at the individual level and at the couple level. The utilization of same-sex couples allowed for a quasi-experimental way of teasing apart parental sex and role, which are often conflated in other-sex couple research regarding parent-child relationships. The sample included 238 coresiding same-sex parents living across the United States who participated in online questionnaires. Results indicated that division of child care did not vary at the family level based on sex of the couple or family formation type, but within step families original parents did engage in more child care than step parents. Perceived parenting roles were associated with division of child care, and couples fell into three parenting classification groups: egalitarian (48.8%), primary-secondary (16.3%), and mismatched (34.9%) based on their egalitarianism and congruence of perceived roles. Primary and equal caregivers had higher ratings of parent-child closeness than did secondary caregivers, even when controlling for whether the parent was an original or step parent. These findings highlight the need to consider both sex and role when investigating parent-child relationships.

DIVISION OF CHILD CARE, PARENTING ROLES, AND PARENT-CHILD
RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN SAME-SEX HEADED FAMILIES

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Williams Institute estimates that 29% of LGBT individuals in the United States have children (The Williams Institute, 2016), and that over 200,000 children in the United States are being raised by same-sex couples (The Williams Institute, 2015). Research has shown that same-sex parents divide child care more equally than other-sex parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004), but there is less research that examines the differences in parenting egalitarianism across same-sex couples. Similarly, there is a substantial research literature regarding differences in parent-child relationship quality between fathers and mothers within other-sex couples; however, there is scant research examining differences in parent-child relationship quality within same-sex couples or between fathers and mothers across same-sex couples. This study examined variation in parenting egalitarianism within and across same-sex couples and how this variation is associated with parent-child relationships, both at the individual level and at the couple level.

Family systems theory posits that individuals in a family are part of a larger whole, and that the family is greater than the sum of its parts (Cox & Paley, 1997). The family system consists of dyadic or larger subsystems, for example husband-wife, parent-child, or siblings subsystems (Cox & Paley, 1997). Individuals and indeed subsystems in

a family exert reciprocal influence on each other, and one part of the system can affect all others (Fincham & Hall, 2005). As such, individuals in a family, as well as relationships within families, are often best studied as part of the linked subsystems within the family (Fincham & Hall, 2005).

Research has shown that, consistent with family systems theory, the marital relationship affects the parent-child relationship. Studies have shown that coparenting mediates between the marital relationship and the parent-child relationship (Feinberg, 2003; Holland & McElwain, 2013). Coparenting is the way two parents work together in their parenting roles, including decision making and management regarding children, amount of support for the other as parent, and division of child care labor (Feinberg, 2003; McHale & Irace, 2011). In particular, division of child care labor has been found to be a central part of coparenting (Patterson et al., 2004). The current study investigated the extent to which variation in division of child care is related to parent-child relationships in same-sex couples.

Division of Child Care

Research has long established that, in other-sex -headed families, couples often specialize the division of labor as a function of parent sex¹ (Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Yavorsky, Dush, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2015). Mothers engage in more child care than fathers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Chan et al., 1998), even when couples plan an egalitarian division of child care before the birth of their child (Cowan & Cowan, 1988). In fact, all mothers, whether in same-sex or other-sex partnerships, are

¹ The use of the term "sex" instead of "gender" for the purposes of this document is explained in detail in the methods section.

more involved in child care than fathers in other-sex couples (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Chan et al., 1998).

Variation in division of child care within and across same-sex families.

Variation in division of child care within same-sex families. Egalitarian parenting is defined as sharing child care tasks equally between the parents, such that both parents are equally primary caregivers; as opposed to specializing into qualitatively and quantitatively unique roles in which there are clear primary and secondary caregivers. The comparative literature shows that same-sex couples divide child care labor in a more egalitarian way than other-sex couples (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Chan et al., 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2012; Patterson et al., 2004), but what are the differences in child care within same-sex couples? Within original same-sex families, in which children are conceived or adopted after the couple is together, research suggests that the biological or legal adoptive parent engages in more child care than the non-biological parent (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Bos et al., 2007, Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Patterson, 1995). Similarly, within same-sex step families, in which children from a previous relationship are brought into a new relationship, research suggests that the biological or original parent also undertakes more of the child care than the new step-parent (Tornello et al., 2015).

Variation in division of child care across same-sex families. There may also be differences across male-male and female-female couples. Researchers studying same-sex parenthood have found that both same-sex male and same-sex female parents desire and achieve a more egalitarian division of labor than parents in other-sex couples, although

perfect equality is rarely achieved (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Panozzo, 2015; Patterson, 1995; Tornello, Sonnenberg, & Patterson, 2015). However, Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) meta-analysis found that across couples, same-sex female couples achieved a more egalitarian division of child care than same-sex male couples. Although, in general, same-sex couples divide child care more equally than other-sex couples, there are differences in parenting egalitarianism within and across same-sex headed families, and these differences are associated with the sex of the couple as well as the method of family formation (e.g., original versus step families) and the parental status of each partner (as described above).

Perception of Division of Child Care Roles

Perceptions of child care roles and actual division of child care tasks may not always be accurate or consistent. In a study using both time diaries and survey data, Yavorsky et al. (2015) found that couples overestimated time spent engaged in child care in the survey data, which would reflect their perceptions, compared to the time diaries, which more accurately reflect actual time spent on caregiving tasks. Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2012) similarly noted that couples estimated "doing a greater share of unpaid labor than is possible" (p. 826), further suggesting a general overestimation of child care duties on average. Particularly in same-sex couples, participants may overestimate their equality of parenting in order to align with their egalitarian ideology.

In addition to misestimation, partners may not agree on who does more caregiving tasks within the household. Downing and Goldberg (2011) found that 20% of same-sex female couples interviewed held discrepant views on division of labor. Biological

mothers perceived that they were more involved in child care, while non-biological mothers perceived the division of child care to be equal (Downing & Goldberg, 2011). Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2007), too, found that biological mothers engaged in more child care, although most couples did not consider her to be the primary parent. Although their ideology was egalitarian, qualitative data showed that some biological mothers secretly perceived their role to be more primary (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). It is clearly important to verify perceived roles with task behavior, and to test disparity within couples in perception of division of child care.

The work-family literature groups couples by provider role attitudes (e.g., coproviders, main-secondary providers, and ambivalent coproviders), considering each partner's values (who should provide), perception of who provides, and actual behavior (Helms, Walls, Crouter, & McHale, 2010; Hood, 1986). Hood (1986) defined family roles as "mutual expectations negotiated by the actors that define each actor's responsibility to other family members in a given situation" (p. 354). Although she studied breadwinning and providing roles, a parallel definition can be drawn for parenting roles. Hood (1986) also stressed the need to understand each partner's expectations of the other and perceptions of their own role. Congruence, then, is the extent to which each partners' perceptions of their own roles or behavior (self-assessment) is in agreement with their partner's perceptions of their roles or behavior (other assessment).

Helms et al. (2010) examined provider role attitudes and division of household labor using Hood's (1986) couple groups of coproviders, main-secondary providers, and

ambivalent providers; however, Helms et al. recognized the need for a fourth group: mismatched couples. In fact, 47% of the couples in the Helms et al. study fell into the mismatched group, who showed low congruence in their role attitudes. In a similar way, when studying division of child care labor and parenting roles, one can expect couples to fall into three groups: egalitarian, primary-secondary, and mismatched.

Same-sex couples do not have heteronormative cultural norms to follow in regards to division of child care, as other-sex couples do. Instead, two studies have found that same-sex mothers use active negotiation to create and maintain satisfactory divisions of labor (Dunne, 2000; Esmail, 2010). This negotiation leads couples to a feeling of fairness and equality, even if actual tasks are not divided perfectly equally (Dunne, 2000; Esmail, 2010). Presumably, successful active negotiation would lead to congruence within the couple concerning who does what. The extent to which egalitarian parenting, or the perception of egalitarian parenting, is related to individual parent-child relationships within and across same-sex couples remains unknown.

Relationship Between Division of Child Care, Parenting Roles, and Parent-Child Relationships

Egalitarian division of child care and parent-child relationship concordance.

If parents are egalitarian in their division of child care labor, are their parent-child relationships with the same child likely to be of similar quality, or concordant?

Considering family systems theory, the coparenting relationship is expected to affect both parent-child relationships, and the parent-child relationships are expected to spillover from one dyad to the other (Cox & Paley, 1997). As Francine Deutsch writes in her book

Halving it All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works (1999), "The attachments of children reflect the arrangements of parents" (p. 120). The choice to divide child care equally may influence both the quantity and quality of parenting. Egalitarian parenting allows both parents to spend time with the child, including experiencing positive interactions, negative interactions, and relational conflict and repair, and presumably these experiences can strengthen the parent-child relationship. Lewis et al. (2009) found that fathers who spent twenty hours a week or more solely caring for their one-year-old child showed more positive emotions when interacting with the child than fathers who spent less time engaged in child care, and that for all fathers, a positive association emerged linking quantity of child care with infant's positive emotions as well.

Not only quantity, but quality of parenting is also expected to affect the parent-child relationship. Two parents who share child care equally may experience more parenting support from each other than parents who divide child care based upon a primary-secondary parenting model. This increased support from a coparent increases the quality of parenting and indeed results in more favorable child adjustment (Bos et al., 2007; Farr & Patterson, 2013). In fact, Patterson (1995) found better child adjustment when the parenting was more egalitarian. McHale and Irace (2011) conclude that a child with "interchangeable" co-parents is "far more likely to experience a supportive, responsive, and growth-promoting environment" (p. 32).

Although there is research on parent-child relationship concordance between mothers and fathers in other-sex couples (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011), there is a paucity of studies examining such concordance of parent-child relationships within same-sex

couples. In a comparative study of father-mother families and mother-mother families, Bos et al. (2007) found that mothers in same-sex couples scored more similarly on emotional involvement and supportive presence as compared to parents in other-sex couples. In the father-mother families, mothers scored significantly higher than fathers on supportive presence, but there was no difference on emotional involvement (Bos et al., 2007). Other than this one study, I have been unable to find additional research on parent-child relationship concordance in same-sex couples.

Child age and the parent-child relationship. Of course, parent perception of the quality of the parent-child relationship may vary with the age of the child. The nature of the relationship changes from intensely caring for the child's needs at younger ages to a decrease in intimacy as the child's world widens to include school and peers. As the child nears and enters adolescence, the parent-child relationship may become more distant as the child needs more autonomy and independence. A study of parents with children age 0-22 found that parent-child relationship quality was higher when the oldest child was under five than when the oldest child was school age or adolescent (Nomaguchi, 2012).

Parent sex and the parent-child relationship. Most of the extant literature, in fact, focuses not on the concordance of parent-child relationships in a family, but rather on which parent has the better parent-child relationship. Studies in this area generally compare parent-child relationships by sex or parenting role. Considering sex, studies of other-sex families have shown that mother-daughter relationship quality is the highest, followed by mother-son, father-daughter, and finally the father-son relationship (Barnett,

Deng, Mills-Koonce, Willoughby, and Cox, 2008; Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Lovas, 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2006). Mothers show higher levels of sensitive parenting than fathers (Barnett et al., 2008), emphasize intimacy with their children more than fathers (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005), and experience higher quality parent-child relationships than fathers (Kouros, Papp, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2014).

Not only the sex of the parent, but the sex of the child is also an important aspect of the parent-child relationship. Recall that in a family system, relationships are reciprocal and bidirectional. Harach and Kuczynski's (2005) qualitative data showed that the parent-child relationship is both constructed and maintained bidirectionally. Therefore, consideration of child attributes is also important. Girls show better parent-child relationships than boys (Barnett et al., 2008; Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Lovas, 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2006). In addition, girls exhibit more positive engagement (Nordahl, Janson, Manger, & Zachrisson, 2014) and higher attachment security (Ruhl, Dolan, & Buhrmester, 2015) with both parents than boys. Across studies, it appears that sex is associated with differences across mother-child and father-child relationships within other-sex parent families.

Similar findings have been reported from comparison studies of female-female and female-male couples. Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) meta-analysis found that children with two mothers showed greater attachment security than children of other-sex parents. Studies comparing same-sex mothers with other-sex couples have shown that, regardless of whether they are coparenting with a man or woman and regardless of whether they are the biological or non-biological parent, all mothers show more emotional involvement

and supportive presence than fathers in other-sex couples (Bos et al., 2007), and all mothers enjoy more warmth and closeness with their children (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

Parenting role and the parent-child relationship. Interestingly, Driscoll & Pianta (2011) found that mothers experience higher levels of warmth and conflict with their children than fathers. Perhaps it is not parental sex but rather amount of time spent parenting, or parenting role, that is associated with parent-child relationships. Caregiver role (i.e. primary caregiver, equal caregiver, or secondary caregiver) is determined by who has the most responsibility for taking care of a child. Primary caregiving fathers are more similar in behavior with their children to primary mothers than to secondary fathers (Lamb & Lewis, 2010). However, in most other-sex families, the mother is typically the primary caregiver and the father is normally the secondary caregiver (Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Yavorsky et al., 2015); and as previously shown, mothers' parent-child relationships are usually of higher quality than fathers' (Kouros et al., 2014). There are fathers, of course, who hold more egalitarian ideologies, and they are more involved with their children than traditional fathers (Bulanda, 2004, Deutsch, 1999). It is only the father's attitude that is associated with his level of involvement, however: Mothers with an egalitarian ideology do not appear to elicit more involvement from a husband who has traditional views (Bulanda, 2004, Riina & Feinberg, 2012).

In Norway, parental leave policies and cultural norms make it more common to practice egalitarian parenting (Nordahl et al., 2014). A study of other-sex parents in Norway found that, in contrast to most American studies, fathers showed more positive engagement with their sons than mothers, and fathers also showed more positive

engagement with their sons than with their daughters (Nordahl et al., 2014). In the Nordahl et al. study (2014), the mother-son and mother-daughter relationships were similar. Based on these findings, it is possible that among more egalitarian parents, when both parents identify as equal parents (or both as primary parents), the sex of the parent is less associated with parent-child relationship quality.

Conflation of parental sex and parenting role. The heteronormative literature shows that mothers have a better parent-child relationship than fathers (Barnett et al., 2008; Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Kouros et al., 2014; Lovas, 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2006). What is not known is why mothers have a better relationship with their children. It could be that females are biologically predisposed to be more nurturing than males. It could be that females in American society are socialized to be more relationship oriented than males. It could also be that mothers are simply spending more time involved in child care, and thus “developing” more as a parent. As already shown, in the heteronormative literature, sex and parenting role are often highly conflated. When a study finds that mothers emphasize intimacy with their children more than fathers (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005), is it because mothers are female or because more time spent with children is associated with intimacy?

The other-sex and same-sex comparative literature can face the same question of conflation. Do children with two mothers show greater attachment security than children of other-sex parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010) because both mothers are female, or because same-sex couples practice more egalitarian parenting than other-sex couples? Without a male-male comparison group it is impossible to know. Similarly, when both

biological and non-biological mothers in same-sex families are found to show more parental concern, emotional involvement, supportive presence (Bos et al., 2007), warmth, and closeness (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010) than fathers in other-sex families, again one could surmise either that women are more relationship oriented or that both mothers in a same-sex family do more parenting than fathers in other-sex families. Previous research on these topics that did not include subsamples of male-male couples are unable to untangle these confounds.

Evidence that females are more relationship oriented. There is some evidence in the extant literature that would support the supposition that mothers have better relationships with their children because females are more relationship oriented. Not only do mothers have better relationships with both their daughters and sons than fathers, but girls also have better relationships with both their mothers and fathers than boys (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Lovas, 2005). Even when parenting is more egalitarian, girls show more positive behaviors paired with positive affect with both parents than boys (Nordahl et al., 2014). As the parent-child relationship is bidirectional, it is also important to consider that daughters may be socialized to be more intimacy oriented than sons. Harach and Kuczynski (2005) found that mothers and fathers emphasize intimacy and attachment as contributing to their relationship with their daughter, but they emphasize companionship, such as spending time having fun, as contributing to their relationship with their sons. Perhaps daughters are socialized to be more relationship oriented than sons, and they become mothers who are more relationship oriented with their children than their husbands are.

Evidence that more time engaged in child care affects relationships. Perhaps, on the other hand, spending more time engaged in child care results in a higher level of parent-child relationship, regardless of sex. A recent meta-analysis by Fedewa, Black, and Ahn (2015) found no association between parents' sex and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Although the study found that same-sex parents had better relationships with their children than other-sex couples, there was considerable variance in effect sizes. To investigate this variance, the authors examined possible moderators. While most of the moderators they included were not significant and therefore could not illuminate the cause of the variance in effect sizes, three moderators were significant. Largest effect sizes appeared when heterosexual fathers, same-sex coupled parents, or single lesbian biological mothers were the reporters. This led the authors to conclude that the relationship between parent-child relationships and sex of the parent was unclear. The authors also noted that perhaps the parent who is the reporter of data is the one with the closer relationship with the child, and that future research should collect data from both parents (Fedewa, Black, & Ahn, 2015), as the proposed study has done.

It is evident that fathers who are primary caregivers parent more like mothers who are primary caregivers than other fathers who are secondary caregivers (Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Lewis et al., 2009). In addition, the familiar ordering of mothers and daughters having better relationships with each other than with sons and fathers, which is common in American literature, is turned on its head in other Western countries. In Norway, where parenting tends to be more egalitarian due to policy and cultural norms, the father-

son relationship has been found to be better than the father-daughter and mother-son relationships (Nordahl et al., 2014).

Even considering non-Western, non-modern societies, research has shown that perhaps it is time spent, due to cultural expectations, not sex, that forges the parent-child relationship. The Aka Pygmies, a tribe of hunter-gatherers in Africa, work together very closely on both subsistence activities and child rearing (Hewlett, 1992, as cited in Silverstein, 1996). Aka fathers cared for infants more than any other fathers in the world, and unlike Western fathers, engaged in intense physical play no more than mothers (Hewlett, 1992, as cited in Silverstein, 1996). In fact, this kind of play was observed in aunts, and may be indicative of a less intimate relationship (Silverstein, 1996).

Silverstein (1996) wrote that the mother's role did not become so primary over the father's role until industrialization took fathers away from the home. Previously, fathers were responsible for the children's "religious, moral, and vocational education" (Silverstein, 1996, p. 16). According to Silverstein (1996), the mother's place as primary caregiver was solidified by Bowlby's (1951) maternal deprivation hypothesis and maternal attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969).

Sex and role are conflated in modern American research because mothers are both female and engage in the majority of child care. In general, mothers and daughters have the highest parent-child relationship quality, followed by mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son (Lovas, 2005). This would seem to show that females are more relationship oriented, perhaps as a result of gender socialization.

On the other hand, men have been shown to establish high quality parent-child relationships, particularly when they are responsible for much of the child care (Lewis et al., 2009). As modern American heteronormative families conflate sex with role, it is helpful to look to other cultures and family types for evidence. Norway allows for egalitarian parenting, and fathers there enjoy better relationships with their children (Nordahl et al., 2014). Similarly, hunter-gatherer fathers were more involved in child care and had more intimate relationships with their children (Hewlett, 1992, as cited in Silverstein, 1996). Clearly, fathers are capable of having intimate relationships with their children, particularly when they are primary caregivers.

The current study. The current study of same-sex couples allowed for a quasi-experimental way of teasing apart parental sex and parenting role with regards to the parent-child relationship. Same-sex parenting worked as a control for parental sex in order to investigate how parent-child relationships are associated with parenting role. The current study also examined parenting egalitarianism across and within diverse types of same-sex families. In addition, child care roles were explored, including perceived parenting roles, task behavior, and couple congruence of perceived parenting roles and task behaviors. Finally, concordance of parent-child relationships within couples was examined, given level of egalitarian parenting. In summary, the current study examined division of child care across and within same-sex couples, grouped couples by egalitarianism and congruence of perceived roles, and investigated which individuals have closer parent-child relationships, and which families have more concordant parent-child relationships.

Gaps in the extant literature on division of child care. Much of the existing literature regarding division of child care in same-sex headed families is comparative in nature, comparing same-sex families with other-sex families (e.g., Chan et al., 1998; Goldberg et al., 2012; Patterson et al., 2004). The few studies examining variability within same-sex couples focus on differences in child care between the biological parent and the non-biological parent (e.g., Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). However, formation of same-sex families is varied. Often, through adoption, neither parent is the biological parent (Goldberg, Gartrell, & Gates, 2014). In addition, some couples intentionally blur the lines of biology. For example, a female couple may choose one partner to carry the pregnancy using the other partner's egg, so that one is the gestational and breastfeeding mother while the other is the genetic mother (Pelka, 2009). Male couples, too, can utilize reproductive technology to blend their sperm before fertilization of a surrogate, thereby being unsure which father is the genetic contributor (Cao, Mills-Koonce, Wood, & Fine, 2016). Therefore, this study did not consider biological versus non-biological parents, but instead considered original families, formed after the couple is together, and step families, in which the child was conceived within a previous heterosexual or same-sex relationship.

The current study also examined differences in division of child care across male-male parents and female-female parents. There are very few studies addressing this question. Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) meta-analysis cites only two references, which are fifteen and twenty-four years old, that found that same-sex female couples parent more

equally than same-sex male couples. There are no additional studies since that meta-analysis of which I am aware.

Gaps in the extant literature on parenting role and parent-child relationships. Heteronormative studies of parent-child relationships find that mothers generally have better relationships with their children than fathers, but cannot unpack the conflated variables of sex and role. This study utilized a sample of same-sex parents to control for sex, in order to separate sex and role as they relate to parent-child relationships.

Gaps in the extant literature on parent-child relationships. The existing literature on parent-child relationships focuses largely on mothers and fathers. The current study explored differences in parent-child relationships within and across same-sex couples. In addition, there is very little literature concerning concordance of parent-child relationships, either in other-sex or same-sex families. This study explored the concordance of parent-child relationships given the variability of level of egalitarian parenting.

Gaps in the extant literature regarding methodology. Most studies of parenting roles and division of labor utilize self-report surveys and only consider either perceived roles or task behavior. This study verified perceived roles with task behavior. In addition, many studies only query one partner. For the current study, both partners of each couple completed the questionnaires independently, enabling me to examine level of agreement between partners.

Finally, most studies have used convenience samples that lack diversity. Samples most often include White, educated, females who live in or near universities (Fedewa et al., 2015). Although the current study is also a convenience study, it utilized internet-based questionnaires and includes a moderately diverse sample of same-sex couples from across the United States, including geographic, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic variability.

Research questions and hypotheses. There are three research questions and sets of corresponding hypotheses driving the current study; see Table 1 for a summary of research questions and hypotheses.

Research question 1. The first research question asked the following question: "How does division of child care vary depending on differences within and between families?" Hypothesis 1A, exploring the question at the family level, is that original families would have a more egalitarian division of child care than step families. At the individual level, hypothesis 1B is that within step families, the original parent would engage in more child care. Hypothesis 1C, again at the family level, is that female-headed families would have a more egalitarian division of child care than male-headed families.

Research question 2. The second research question examined the validity of classification of couples into three groups (egalitarian, primary-secondary, and mismatched) based on their egalitarianism and congruence of perceived roles: "How does division of child care vary based on perceived parenting roles?" At the individual level, Hypothesis 2A proposed that primary caregivers would have the highest scores on task

behavior, followed by equal caregivers, and secondary caregivers would have the lowest scores. At the family level, Hypothesis 2B proposed that the primary-secondary group would display the greatest division of child care behaviors, followed by the mismatched group, and that egalitarian couples would display the least division of child care.

Hypothesis 2C, also at the family level, supposed that couple division of labor congruence categories (created from task behavior) would not be independent of the couple parenting groups (created from perceived parenting roles).

Research question 3. The third research question, concerning parent-child relationships in same-sex couples, asked the following question: "Which individuals have closer parent-child relationships, and how does parent-child relationship concordance vary based on couple parenting group?" At the individual level, Hypothesis 3A proposed that primary and egalitarian caregivers would have higher scores on parent-child relationship closeness than secondary caregivers. Also at the individual level, Hypothesis 3B proposed that women would have higher scores on parent-child relationship closeness than men. At the family level, Hypothesis 3C proposed that the inter-parental relationship would spill over into the parent-child relationships, such that egalitarian couples would have the highest concordance between parent-child relationships, followed by primary-secondary couples. There was no specific hypothesis concerning the mismatched group. As there is very little literature concerning concordance in parent-child relationships, Hypothesis 3C was based upon family systems theory.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Participants

Participants came from cohort one and cohort two of the New American Family Study, a national study of same-sex couples, the transition to parenthood, and sources of stress and support for people who identify as gay, lesbian, transgender, or gender non-conforming. Data were collected from 2014 to 2017.

Recruitment. Participants responded to ads placed on Facebook and Craigslist, as well as word of mouth. They were then sent an informational email detailing the study's legitimacy and scope, eligibility criteria, compensation, risk, and confidentiality. After agreeing to be contacted, participants were called by research assistants to make personal contact, to verify eligibility, and to determine which version of the questionnaires a couple should receive (there were four versions: one for couples with no children, one for couples whose youngest child was under 12 years of age, one for couples whose youngest child was between 12 and 18 years of age, and one for couples whose youngest child was over 18 years of age). During this phone call, additional information about the focal (youngest) child's conception and legal relationship to each parent was also collected.

Eligibility. To be eligible to participate in the New American Family Study, participants had to (1) self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender or gender

nonconforming; (2) be above the age of 18 years, and (3) reside with their romantic partners.

Study subsample inclusion. The study's subsample included only those whose youngest child (the focal child of the study about whom all questions were referenced) was under the age of 18 years and those who had complete data on all key measures. Inclusion in the sample considered only same-sex couples as determined by natal biological sex. Participants who identified their sex as transsexual, intersex (both male and female), or other represent too small of a group to include in quantitative analysis, especially considering that this study's sample only includes participants with children. As much as inclusion is valued, the current study's sample size prohibits inclusion of transsexual participants, and only participants who identified their sex as male or female were included.

In addition, consideration of gender identity is outside the purview of this study. Because of the inclusivity of recruitment, a substantial number of participants identified as gender queer, gender nonconforming, androgyne (unisex, ambiguous, or both male and female), transgender, other, or no answer. For example, one participant did not self-classify gender identity, writing in instead "against the idea of gender". As gender terminology and ideology continues to evolve and definitions even within the LGBTQ community are in flux, gender identity was not used in this study to categorize participants (as exclusion criteria or as a covariate) due to concerns about the ambiguity of some of the self-identifying labels. As such, participants of all gender identities were

included, and natal biological sex was used as the demographic variable. Further consideration of this decision and its potential limitations are presented in the Discussion.

Sample characteristics. 1020 individuals participated in this study. Of those, 274 (27%) had children age 18 or under living in the home. Twelve individuals who identified as Trans or intersex and 24 individuals with missing data on key measures were dropped from the sample, leaving a final sample size of $N = 238$ participants used in the individual level analyses. For the family level analyses, those individuals whose partners did not participate were dropped from the sample, leaving a final family level sample size of $N = 86$ families.

Individual demographics. Participants lived across the United States including rural, suburban, and urban settings. Participants were moderately racially diverse (85.3% White, 8.4% Black or African American, and 5.5% other minority) and socioeconomically diverse (10.5% high school degree or less, 39.9% some college or associate's degree, 22.3% four-year college degree, and 26.9% post graduate training or degree). The sample was 92.9% female. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 68 years old and averaged 36.39 years old ($SD = 7.79$). They had an average of 1.74 children ($SD = 1.00$). For 87% the youngest child was under age 12 and for 13% the youngest child was 12 to 18 years old.

Couple demographics. 52.1% of the families were formed as step families and 47.9% were formed as original families. Both partners in 75.6% of the couples were White. Couple income-to-needs ratio revealed that 74.4% of the couples were not poor

(with an income-to-needs ratio of > 1) and 7% were poor (with an income-to-needs ratio of ≤ 1). 18.6% were missing income data.

Procedures

Each partner was sent a link to individual Qualtrics questionnaires which they completed online. Individuals who submitted questionnaires were compensated with Amazon.com e-gift cards.

Measures

Individual-level analysis predictors. Individual-level predictors reflect constructs that vary across individuals within families.

Sex of parent is by self-report, and does not encompass gender identity or sexual orientation, which were asked in separate questions and which were not included in this analysis.

Parent status was measured for each parent within families. Within step families, biological parents or original adoptive parents were identified as the original parent. If they were not a biological or original adoptive parent, they were identified as the step parent. (Note that in step families, a parent who later adopted a partner's biological or adopted child was coded as a step parent, in order to denote that they are not the original parent). Both parents in original families were identified as original parents.

Perceived parenting role is based on parent self-identification. Participants were given definitions of five caregiver roles: sole caregiver, primary caregiver, equal caregiver, secondary/supportive caregiver, and non-caregiver. Each participant was then asked to describe 1) your caregiving role and 2) your partner's caregiving role.

Responses were 0 (*sole caregiver*), 1 (*primary caregiver*), 2 (*equal caregiver*), 3 (*secondary/supportive caregiver*), and 4 (*non-caregiver*). These categorical variables were used as individual level variables (based on self-assessment) and as a family-level variable (described below) regarding couple parenting group.

Couple-level analysis predictors. Couple-level predictors reflect constructs that are shared within families and vary across families.

Family formation type (original or step) was determined by one item: Was the focal child conceived prior to or after the start of your current relationship? If the child was conceived prior to the start of the current relationship, the family was identified as a step family. If the child was conceived after the start of the current relationship, the family was identified as an original family.

Couple sex was determined by the natal sex of the same-sex parents.

Couple parenting group was determined by comparing self-reports of each parent. Assignment into couple level parenting groups was a two-step process using the perceived parenting role variable for both parents. Parents were asked to report on their perceived parenting role (primary, secondary...) *and* what they believe is their partner's parenting role. Couples were first scored as congruent or mismatched. A couple was scored as *congruent* if Partner 1's self-assessment matched Partner 2's other-assessment AND if Partner 1's other assessment matched Partner 2's self-assessment. If not, the couple was scored as *mismatched*. (See Appendix B for scores that were considered a match.) Then, congruent couples were scored as egalitarian or primary-secondary. Congruent couples were scored as *egalitarian* if they agree that they are both primary or

equal caregivers (any combination of 1s and 2s only on Perceived Parenting Roles). Congruent couples were scored as *primary-secondary* if they agree that one parent is primary or sole caregiver and the other is secondary or non-caregiver. (See Appendix B for scores that will be considered egalitarian and primary-secondary.) This two-step process created a 3-category variable: egalitarian, primary-secondary, and mismatched.

Individual-level analysis outcomes. Individual-level outcomes reflect constructs that vary across individuals within families.

Individual division of labor was measured by the "Who Does What?" measure (Cowan & Cowan, 1990), which was adapted for same-sex couples by Charlotte Patterson (Patterson, 1995) (Cronbach's alpha = .86). The Who Does What has 20 items, such as "Reading to our child" and "Dealing with the doctor regarding our child's health", on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*My partner does it all*) to 9 (*I do it all*). A score of 5 indicates *We both do this about equally*. Each parent responded independently, thinking about division of child care for the youngest child. Individual participants' scores on the Who Does What were centered by subtracting 5 (so that 0 would represent egalitarian division of labor) and averaged across the 20 items to create a continuous variable on a -4 to +4 scale, such that higher scores indicate that the individual does more child care.

Individual parent-child relationship quality was measured by The Child-Parent Relationship Scale (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Pianta, 1992), which assesses parents' perceptions of their relationship with their child. Parents answer 30 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*Not true at all*) to 4 (*Very True*). The current study used the

Positive Aspects of Relationship, or Closeness, subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$), which consists of ten items such as "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with my child" and "My interactions with my child make me feel effective and confident as a parent". All ten items are appropriate for use with parents of children from 0-18. For the individual, the mean of the ten items were taken, resulting in scores ranging from 0 to 4, such that higher scores indicate a closer parent-child relationship.

Couple-level analysis outcomes. Couple-level outcomes reflect constructs that are shared within families and vary across families.

Couple division of labor egalitarianism was measured by comparing scores of the "Who Does What?" measure (Cowan & Cowan, 1990) across parents within a family (see the information about the "Who Does What" above, under *Individual division of labor*). The extent to which couples are egalitarian or non-egalitarian in their division of child care tasks were used to test the variability of parenting egalitarianism across couples, given couple sex and family formation type. In addition, this measure aided in validating the couple level parenting groups that I created. This measure was created by first taking the absolute value of Partner 1 and Partner 2's WDW mean scores and then summing them, so that values closer to 0 represent a more egalitarian couple. Scores can range from 0 to 8. (Recall that individual scores were created by centering the scale such that individual scores range from -4 to +4 where 0 represents an egalitarian division of labor.) To receive a score of '0' (more egalitarian), Partner 1's and Partner 2's scores would both be near or equal to 0, indicating that they both believe they do child care tasks equally, and their combined score of 0 will reflect that egalitarianism. There are multiple ways to

have a higher, non-egalitarian score. For example, if Partner 1's individual mean score is a +4, indicating that she believes she does all the child care tasks, and Partner 2's score is also a +4, indicating that she *also* believes *she* does all the child care tasks, then their combined score of 8 will reflect that neither partner believes that they are egalitarian. Alternatively, if Partner 1 admits that her partner does all the child care and therefore has a score of -4, and Partner 2 agrees that she does all the child care and has a score of +4, then their combined score of 8 will reflect that they are a non-egalitarian couple.

Couple division of labor congruence was measured by comparing scores of the "Who Does What?" measure (Cowan & Cowan, 1990) across parents within a family (see the information about the "Who Does What" above, under *Individual division of labor*). The extent to which couples agree about the division of child care tasks served to validate the couple level parenting groups that I created from the perceived roles. It was measured first by recoding the Who Does What individual mean score into a categorical variable with three levels: "my partner does more" = 1, "we do child care about equally" = 2, and "I do more" = 3 (recall that individual scores were created by centering the scale such that individual scores range from -4 to +4 where 0 represents an egalitarian division of labor). Then the two partners' categorical scores were compared. If they both scored a 2, meaning both partners felt they divided child care equally, the couple was given a score of 1 (egalitarian). If one partner scored a 3, meaning "I do more", and the other partner agreed with this, scoring a 1 "my partner does more", then the couple was given a score of 3 (primary-secondary). If both partners score a 3, meaning they both feel that they do more than half, or if one scores a 3 and the other a 2, then they are mismatched

towards claiming to do more and the couple is scored as a 2 (mismatched towards one or both do more). If both partners score a 1, meaning they both feel that they do less than half, or if one scores a 1 and the other a 2, then they are mismatched towards claiming to do less and the couple is scored as a 4 (mismatched towards one or both do less) (see Table 2).

Couple difference in parent-child relationship quality was measured by comparing scores across parents (within families) on The Child-Parent Relationship Scale (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Pianta, 1992) (see the information about the CPRS above, under *Individual parent-child relationship quality*). The couple difference score measured concordance between partners in parent-child relationship closeness with the same child. It showed whether partners had similar levels of closeness with their child as one another, or whether the partners had a disparate level of relationship closeness with their child. The couple difference score was computed by taking the absolute value of the difference between partners' individual scores, and range from 0 to 4, with lower scores indicating more concordance.

Individual-level analysis covariates. *Individual race, education level, sex, age, age of focal child, number of children, and parent status* (original or step parent) were considered as possible covariates.

Couple-level analysis covariates. *Couple race* was coded as White if both partners are Non-Hispanic White, and Minority/Mixed if one or both partners are of a racial/ethnic minority. *Couple income-to-needs ratio* was calculated considering household income and number of people in the home and used the 2015 poverty

threshold from the U.S. Census Bureau. Couples with an income-to-needs ratio of ≤ 1 were scored as poor and couples with an income-to-needs ratio of > 1 were scored as not poor. *Couple sex* was determined by the natal sex of the same-sex parents. *Couple age* was calculated by averaging both partners' ages. *Family formation type* (original or step) was determined by one item: Was the focal child conceived prior to or after the start of your current relationship? *Age of focal child* and *number of children* were also considered as possible couple covariates.

See Table 3 for a summary of variables.

Plan of Analysis

Analysis consisted of ANOVAs in SPSS for the family level analyses, and mixed modeling in SPSS for the individual level analyses, to account for the nesting of the individuals in the couples. Covariates were evaluated before all analyses and included where appropriate.

Hypotheses 1A and 1C were tested with ANOVAs, using family formation type (1A) and couple sex (1C) as independent variables and couple division of labor egalitarianism as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 1B was tested with mixed modeling, with individual parent status (original or step) predicting individual division of child care labor (Who Does What) score.

Hypothesis 2A was tested with mixed modeling, such that individual perceived parenting roles predicted individual scores on the division of child care labor.

Hypotheses 2B was tested with an ANOVA, using the three couple parenting groups to predict couple division of labor egalitarianism. Hypothesis 2C was tested with chi

square, testing the independence of the three couple parenting groups created from perceived roles and the three couple congruence groups created from division of labor task behavior. This also served to validate the parenting groups of egalitarian, primary-secondary, and mismatched.

Hypotheses 3A and 3B were tested using mixed modeling. Individual perceived parenting role (3A) and sex of parent (3B) were used to predict individual parent-child relationship scores (Child-Parent Relationship Scale). Hypothesis 3C was tested with an ANOVA using the three couple parenting groups to predict the couple difference score from the Child-Parent Relationship Scale.

See Table 1 for a summary of the plan of analysis.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics. Individuals identified themselves as 3.4% sole caregivers, 20.2% primary caregivers, 60.5% equal caregivers, 15.1% secondary caregivers, and .8% non-caregivers. Couple parenting groups included 42 egalitarian couples (48.8%), 14 primary-secondary couples (16.3%), and 30 mismatched couples (34.9%).

Table 4 shows bivariate correlations among the key *individual* variables and covariates, as well as means and standard deviations. Parent status (original=1 or step parent=0) was positively associated with division of labor, and sex was marginally associated with parent-child relationship quality.

Table 5 shows bivariate correlations among the key *couple* variables and covariates, as well as means and standard deviations. Family formation and couple sex were not associated with couple egalitarianism.

Evaluating potential covariates. I identified the following potential covariates for the individual level analyses: individual race, education level, sex, age, age of child, number of children, and parent status (original or step parent). Potential couple level covariates were couple race, couple income-to-needs ratio, couple sex, couple average age, age of child, the total number of children who live in the house, and family formation type (original or step family).

Potential covariates were evaluated utilizing three methods, identifying as covariates any variable that was correlated or associated with both the independent and dependent variables, as this would reveal a potential confound. For continuous and binomial variables, correlation was examined. ANOVAs were used to examine associations between multinomial and continuous variables. Finally, the association between two categorical variables was tested with chi-square.

For the individual level analyses, only parent status (original or step parent) was significantly associated with perceived parenting role, individual division of labor, and parent-child relationship quality. Therefore, parent status was included as a covariate for the analyses of hypothesis 2A (perceived parenting role predicting individual division of labor) and 3A (perceived parenting role predicting parent-child relationship).

For the couple level analyses, only family formation type was significantly associated with both couple parenting group and couple difference in parent-child relationship quality. Therefore, family formation type was included as a covariate for the analysis of hypothesis 3C (couple parenting group predicting couple difference in parent-child relationship quality). (See Appendix C for all results of the covariate testing.)

Division of Child Care

Research question 1 (hypotheses 1A, 1B, and 1C) asked: "How does division of child care vary depending on differences within and between families?"

Original versus step families (1A). Significant main effects on couple egalitarianism were not found for family formation type, $F(1,84) = 2.55, p = .114$. Original families' mean level of couple division of labor egalitarianism was .99 ($SD =$

1.19), while step families' mean was 1.42 ($SD = 1.28$), where lower scores indicate more egalitarian.

Original versus step parents (1B). Within step families, the effect of parental status on division of labor was significant, $F(1,122) = 35.30, p < .001$, supporting the hypothesis that original parents engage in more child care than step parents. Original parents' individual division of labor mean score was .55 ($SD = .78$), and step parents' mean score was -.32 ($SD = .88$), where higher scores indicate that the individual does more child care.

Female versus male couples (1C). Significant main effects on couple egalitarianism were not found for couple sex, $F(1,84) = 2.30, p = .133$. The direction of the effect was also unexpected: The mean level of egalitarianism for male couples was lower ($M = .48, SD = .25$) than for female families ($M = 1.27, SD = 1.27$), where 0 represents perfect egalitarianism.

Division of Child Care and its Relation to Perceived Parenting Roles

Research question 2 (hypotheses 2A, 2B, and 2C) examined the validity of classification of couples into three groups (egalitarian, primary-secondary, and mismatched) based on their egalitarianism and congruence of perceived roles and asked "How does division of child care vary based on perceived parenting roles?"

Primary versus equal and secondary caregivers (2A). The effect of parental role on division of labor, while controlling for parent status (original or step parent), was significant, $F(4,232) = 55.46, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons support the hypothesis that primary caregivers ($M = .97, SD = .62$) engage in more child care than equal caregivers

($M = .09$, $SD = .50$), and secondary caregivers ($M = -.78$, $SD = .76$) (where higher scores indicate more child care), after controlling for parent status. There was also a significant difference between equal and secondary caregivers.

Couple parenting group and egalitarianism (2B). As expected, significant main effects on couple egalitarianism were found for couple parenting group, $R^2 = .34$, $F(2,83) = 14.84$, $p < .001$, using the more rigorous Welch test because of unequal variances. Post hoc comparisons support the hypothesis that egalitarian couples (by couple parenting group) were more egalitarian by task behavior ($M = .60$, $SD = .46$) than mismatched couples ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 1.10$) and primary-secondary couples ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.82$), where lower scores indicate more egalitarianism. There was not a significant difference between primary-secondary couples and mismatched couples at the .05 level ($p = .090$), using the Dunnett C test because of unequal variances.

Couple parenting group and congruence (2C). Scores of 2 (mismatched towards one or both do more) and 4 (mismatched towards one or both do less) were combined into a single category (mismatched). A chi-square test found a relationship between couple parenting group and couple congruence (measured by task behavior), $X^2(4, N = 86) = 39.53$, $p < .001$, supporting the hypothesis that couple division of labor congruence would not be independent of couple parenting group. The strength of the association, given by Cramer's V ($V = .48$), shows probable redundancy between the two variables. The direction of the effect is also as expected, as can be seen in Table 6. Ratios of observed counts to expected counts show that observed occurrence of couples who are in the same classification by both parenting group and couple division of labor

congruence scores range from 1.5 to 3 times greater than would be expected by chance. The cells where couples fall into different classifications on the two measures are at chance or less than chance levels.

Parent-Child Relationships

Research question 3 (hypotheses 3A, 3B, and 3C), concerning parent-child relationships, asked: "Which individuals have closer parent-child relationships, and how does parent-child relationship concordance vary based on couple parenting group?"

Primary versus equal and secondary caregivers (3A). The effect of parental role on parent-child relationship quality, while controlling for parent status (original or step parent), was significant, $F(4,219) = 8.01, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons support the hypothesis that primary caregivers ($M = 3.53, SD = .35$) and equal caregivers ($M = 3.40, SD = .51$) would have higher parent-child relationship scores than secondary caregivers ($M = 2.84, SD = .68$) (where higher scores indicate a closer relationship), after controlling for parent status. There was no difference between primary and equal caregivers.

Women versus men (3B). There was a marginal effect of parental sex on parent-child relationship quality, $F(1,129) = 3.28, p = .072$. The direction of the effect was as expected: The mean level of parent-child relationship quality for women was higher ($M = 3.34, SD = .57$) than for men ($M = 3.08, SD = .59$).

Concordance of parent-child relationships (3C). An ANCOVA was conducted to compare couple differences in parent-child relationship quality (concordance) of the three couple parenting groups while controlling for family formation type (original or

step). The results were marginally significant, $F(2,82) = 2.91, p = .060$. The direction of the effect was as expected: The mean level of couple difference in parent-child relationship quality for egalitarian couples was lower ($M = .40, SD = .40$) than for primary-secondary couples ($M = .60, SD = .38$) and mismatched couples ($M = .69, SD = .56$), showing that egalitarian couples have the most concordance of parent-child relationships, followed by primary-secondary couples and mismatched couples. Egalitarian couples had significantly more concordant parent-child relationships than mismatched couples, but egalitarian couples did not have significantly more concordant parent-child relationships than primary-secondary couples.

Posthoc Analyses

All analyses were re-run with females only and without cases that were missing greater than 10% of the data on the summed scales, the Who Does What and the Child-Parent Relationship Scale. None of these analyses resulted in changes in direction or significance, so the final analyses reported include the full data.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Using a sample of coresiding same-sex parents living across the United States, in the current study I explored division of child care labor, perceived parenting roles, and parent-child relationship quality both within and across same-sex couples. I investigated how division of child care varied depending on differences between individuals and families, how division of child care varied based on perceived parenting roles, and how sex and role were associated with parent-child relationship quality. Finally, I examined whether parent-child relationship concordance varied based on couple child care roles.

Division of Child Care

Based on research that all mothers, regardless of partnering with a man or woman, are more involved in child care than fathers in other-sex couples (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Chan et al., 1998), and considering Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) meta-analysis, which found that female couples parent more equally than male couples, I hypothesized that female couples would be more egalitarian in child care division than male couples. My results did not support this hypothesis; in fact, male couples in this study were more egalitarian than female couples (although this trend was not statistically significant).

This result may be driven by the small number of male-male couples ($n = 6$) in comparison to number of female-female couples ($n = 80$). In addition, this study did not include employment data, which would have enabled me to probe more deeply how couples make decisions regarding division of child care. Couples do not make child care decisions in a vacuum; employment situations, other household labor, and personal preferences may all affect the extent of division of child care labor. As same sex couples do not have heteronormative roles to slide into, they may engage in active negotiation to create their family's division of child care labor (Dunne, 2000; Esmail, 2010), including concurrent decisions on all of the aforementioned factors. Finally, it is possible that over time, male-male couples with children are becoming more egalitarian. The Biblarz and Stacey (2010) conclusion on sex difference in egalitarian parenting stemmed from studies published in 1993 and 2002, and the data from the current study was collected from 2014-2017.

There were mixed results concerning the variation of division of labor based on family formation. Contrary to the hypothesis, originally formed families were no more egalitarian than step families. However, within step families, as hypothesized, original parents did engage in more child care than step parents. Therefore, the variation in division of labor *within* originally formed families may be similar to the variation in division of labor *within* step families. This is consistent with previous research which has shown that within originally formed families, biological parents or legal adoptive parents engage in more child care than non-biological parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Bos et al., 2007, Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Patterson, 1995).

In summary, the results of this study suggest that division of child care did not vary at the family level based on sex of the couple or family formation type. Within step families, however, original parents did engage in more child care than step parents. Clearly, differences in division of child care were greater within families than across families. Future research should continue to investigate the factors within original families that contribute to variation in division of child care labor, such as biological and adoptive status, employment status, division of household labor, gender identity and expression, and personal preferences.

Parenting Roles

Both partners of each couple completed the questionnaires independently. Individuals identified themselves as 3.4% sole caregivers, 20.2% primary caregivers, 60.5% equal caregivers, 15.1% secondary caregivers, and .8% non-caregivers. At the couple level, based upon both partners' perceived parenting roles, a categorical variable was created to indicate whether the couple was egalitarian, primary-secondary, or mismatched in regards to their child care roles. The couple parenting groups were 48.8% egalitarian, 16.3% primary-secondary, and 34.9% mismatched. Clearly, egalitarian parenting is desired by almost half of these same-sex couples. Next, similar to the Helms et al. (2010) study, which found that 47% of couples were mismatched on provider role attitudes, a large number of same-sex couples in this study (more than one-third) were mismatched on perceived parenting roles of self and partner. This is consistent with previous research that partners may hold discrepant views, or have low congruence,

regarding their own and their partner's child care roles (Downing & Goldberg, 2011; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007).

In order to verify perceived parenting roles with parenting task behavior, I tested the effect of parental role on division of labor. As expected, primary caregivers engaged in more child care than equal caregivers, followed by secondary caregivers, even when controlling for parent status (original or step parent). Although some research indicates that individuals may overestimate their contribution to child care (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Yavorsky et al., 2015) and same-sex couples in particular may overestimate their egalitarianism, this finding supports the notion that individuals' role perceptions do map onto their actual task behavior.

The validity of the classification groups (egalitarian, primary-secondary, and mismatched) by egalitarianism was confirmed. In support of the hypothesis, egalitarian couples (by couple parenting group) were more egalitarian by task behavior than mismatched couples and primary-secondary couples. The validity of the classification groups by congruence, the degree to which partners agree on both of their roles, was also verified. As expected, parenting classification group and couple congruence on task behavior were highly associated. For example, couples who were egalitarian by perceived roles *and* by division of labor congruence occurred 1.5 times more than would be expected by chance, couples who were primary-secondary by perceived roles *and* by division of labor congruence occurred 3 times more than would be expected by chance, and couples who were mismatched by perceived roles *and* by division of labor congruence occurred 1.6 times more than would be expected by chance. In sum,

comparing the way partners each perceive their parenting role and their partner's role with the way they each describe how child care tasks are divided shows that the way couples divide child care tasks is associated with their perceived parenting roles.

Parent-Child Relationship Quality

How are sex and role associated with parent-child relationship quality? Previous research shows that mothers have higher relationship quality than fathers in other-sex families (Barnett et al., 2008; Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Lovas, 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2006). Previous research also shows that equal caregiving fathers can have higher relationship quality with their sons than mothers do (Nordahl et al., 2014), and that primary caregiving fathers relate to their children in ways similar to primary mothers (Lamb & Lewis, 2010).

As sex and role are conflated in most research, the current study utilized a sample of same-sex parents to separate sex and role. The results revealed that, as hypothesized, primary and equal caregivers had higher parent-child closeness than secondary caregivers, even when controlling for whether the parent was an original or step parent. Women had marginally closer parent-child relationships with their children than men, but this result was not statistically significant. Based on these results, future research investigating parent-child relationships in other-sex couples should examine both sex and role. In addition, past research that consistently found mothers to have higher quality parent-child relationships than fathers should be read with caution, considering the possibility that those results had confounded sex with role.

Finally, this study examined whether parent-child relationship concordance varied based on couple parenting roles. I hypothesized that, based on family systems theory, the coparenting relationship would spill over into the parent-child relationships and that egalitarian couples would have the highest concordance between parent-child relationships. I found that egalitarian couples had more concordant relationships with the same child than primary-secondary couples and mismatched couples, but this association was not statistically significant. Perhaps it would have been preferable to consider satisfaction with the couple parenting roles rather than just how the couple divided the parenting roles. In family systems theory, the coparenting relationship is expected to affect both parent-child relationships; therefore, I would expect both parent-child relationships to be closer if the coparenting relationship resulted in higher levels of coparenting satisfaction. Unfortunately, this study did not include a measure of coparenting satisfaction.

In sum, primary and equal caregivers had higher parent-child closeness than secondary caregivers, and this was not driven by whether the parent was an original or step parent. More time spent with a child can create a closer relationship, regardless of parent status or parent gender. More time engaged in child care may strengthen the parent-child relationship through more relational interactions and through relational conflict and repair. In addition, equal caregiving may improve quality of caregiving from both parents through greater support from their partner.

As gender stereotypes are being questioned more, same-sex *and* other-sex couples may not slide so easily into historically heteronormative divisions of labor. Fathers and

step parents should be advised that taking a more central role in caring for children is associated with closer parent-child relationships. As Francine Deutsch writes in her book about other-sex parenting, *Halving it All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works* (1999), "In general, children seemed to be more attached to the parent who was relatively more available" (p. 119). Children want more time from their parents (Moore & Cartwright, 2005), and primary and equal caregivers are rewarded with the closest parent-child relationships.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

The central strength of this study is the utilization of a sample of same-sex couples to control for sex, in order to separate sex from parenting role. No other study, to my knowledge, has specifically examined parenting role associations with parent-child relationships in same-sex couples. Another strength of this study is that it is based on a sample with some racial, geographical, and socioeconomic diversity (as compared to many other samples of same-sex parents).

In addition to the strengths of the sample itself, the study design enabled the comparison of perceived roles with task behavior. A final major strength of the study was the utilization of data from both partners. This permitted the analysis of congruence between partners on both perceived roles and task behavior.

Some limitations of this study must be considered. The analysis was correlational in nature and should not be used to draw causal conclusions. As is the case in most social science research, the sample size for males was much smaller than for females, which lead to low power. Participants were self-selected into the study, and data was collected

by self-report surveys only. In addition, data regarding the parent-child relationship reflect the parent's perception only, as child data was not collected.

The ordering of the parenting questionnaires presented the Who Does What questionnaire first, asking the participant to consider who does each of 20 parenting tasks, followed by the questions asking participants to rate their own and their partner's parenting role as primary, secondary, or equal caregiver. It is possible that this ordering could have contaminated individuals' perceptions of parenting roles, and that a cleaner design would have counterbalanced the order of those two sections.

This study utilized a sample of same-sex parents to control for sex while examining parent-child relationships and parenting roles. However, this study only controls for natal biological sex and does not control for gender. Gender may play a different role in choices couples make regarding division of labor, in how individuals perceive their own parenting roles, and in parent-child relationships. Future research should investigate whether femininity is associated with more nurturing caregiving, for example, or whether masculine traits may lead an individual to be more career oriented, thereby limiting caregiving role. In original (non-adoptive) same-sex families, gender may also play a role in decisions couples make regarding child conception and gestation. Perhaps the findings that biological parents in original same-sex families are more involved in child care are in fact driven by these prior decisions that were based on gender.

Although it is a limitation of the current study that only sex and not gender was included, there is some additional evidence that caregiving role, and not sex or gender,

influences parent-child synchrony through structural and functional changes in the brain. Abraham et al. (2014) found that the *experience* of caregiving may trigger changes in the brain in both women and men. The authors studied primary caregiving mothers and secondary caregiving fathers in other-sex relationships and primary caregiving fathers in same-sex relationships. Using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, they found no differences in masculinity and femininity between the primary caregiving fathers in same-sex couples and the secondary caregiving fathers in other-sex couples (Abraham et al., 2014). They also found no differences in neural networks between biological and non-biological primary caregiving fathers (Abraham et al., 2014). Finally, they found that both primary caregiving fathers and mothers had better synchrony with their children (average age of eleven months) than secondary caregiving fathers (Abraham et al., 2014). Therefore, it may not be sex or gender or genetic relatedness that drives parenting role and parent-child relationships. Instead, it is possible that parenting role drives changes in both male and female brains, which leads to parenting behaviors that promote parent-child synchrony (Abraham et al., 2014). This would be consistent with the finding of the current study that primary and equal caregivers had higher parent-child relationships than secondary caregivers after controlling for parent status. Future research should continue to investigate the associations between gender, parenting role, and parent-child relationships.

Finally, the data for the current study was collected both before and after the 2015 US Supreme Court ruling to legalize same-sex marriage. It remains to be seen how this historical event will affect LGBT individuals' psychological perception of their own

parenting. Future research will be able to compare historical cohorts of same-sex couples as the sociocultural climate becomes more accepting of same-sex headed families.

Future studies should also incorporate employment data of both partners when studying division of child care and parenting roles. Time diaries would also be a useful measure to more accurately reflect division of labor. Child age and child sex should also be scrutinized more closely, given how they may affect parent-child relationships. Finally, future studies should examine child outcomes. The next step will be to answer the questions of whether egalitarian parenting versus primary-secondary parenting has an effect on child outcomes, and whether parental congruence, or agreement, regarding division of child care and parenting roles affects child outcomes.

Conclusion

Previous research has found that same-sex couples parent more equally than other-sex parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004), but all same-sex couples are not the same. Using a sample of coresiding same-sex parents living across the United States, this study found that there was no difference between male-male couples and female-female couples or between originally formed families and step families in division of child care labor. Within step families, original parents did engage in more child care than step parents. Primary and equal parents had closer relationships with their children than secondary parents, regardless of parent gender or whether the parent was an original or step parent. Implications for researchers include the need to consider both parent gender and role when studying parent-child

relationships and the caution that past research on parent-child relationships has often confounded sex with role. Implications for families include the idea that time spent with a child may create a closer relationship, and fathers and step parents may have closer relationships with their children, simply by taking an equal parenting role.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1. Summary of Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Analysis Plan

Topic	Question	Hypothesis	Unit of Analysis	Analysis Plan
Topic 1: Division of Child Care	Question 1: How does division of child care vary depending on differences within and between families? (by task behavior)	1A original families will be more egalitarian than step	Family	ANOVA: Family Formation Type → Couple Egalitarianism (WDW)
		1B within step families, original parent will do more child care than step	Individual	Mixed modeling: Parent Status → Indiv. Div. Labor (WDW)
		1C female are more egalitarian than male	Family	ANOVA: Couple Sex → Couple Egalitarianism (WDW)
Topic 2: Classifying families based on egalitarianism and congruence (by perception of roles)	Question 2: How does division of child care vary based on perceived parenting roles?	2A primary caregivers will do the most tasks, followed by equal caregivers, then secondary caregivers	Individual	Mixed modeling: Role → Indiv. Div. Labor (WDW)
		2B couple disparity on tasks will be highest for primary-secondary, followed by mismatched, then egalitarian	Family	ANOVA: Couple Group → Couple Egalitarianism (WDW)
		2C couple division of labor congruence categories will not be independent of couple parenting groups	Family	Chi Square: Couple Group / Couple Congruence (WDW)
Topic 3:	Question 3: Which individuals have	3A primary and equal caregivers (by perceived role) will have higher P-C rel	Individual	Mixed modeling: Role → Individual CPRS

Predicting Parent-Child Relationship	higher P-C relationship quality (3A, 3B), and how does P- C relationship concordance vary based on couple parenting group (3C)?	scores than secondary caregivers		
		3B women will have higher P-C rel scores than men	Individual	Mixed modeling: Indiv. Sex → Indiv. CPRS
		3C egalitarian families will have the most concordance of P-C rel, followed by primary-secondary. No hypothesis on mismatched group	Family	ANOVA: Couple Group → Couple Difference CPRS

Table 2. Couple Division of Labor Congruence

Partner 1	Partner 2	Couple Score
2 equal	2 equal	1 egalitarian
3 I do more	1 my partner does more	3 primary-secondary
1 my partner does more	3 I do more	3 primary-secondary
3 I do more	3 I do more	2 mismatched towards more
3 I do more	2 equal	2 mismatched towards more
2 equal	3 I do more	2 mismatched towards more
1 my partner does more	1 my partner does more	4 mismatched toward less
1 my partner does more	2 equal	4 mismatched toward less
2 equal	1 my partner does more	4 mismatched toward less

Table 3. Variables

Construct	Measure	Categorical Categories	Continuous Range
Predictors			
Individual Sex	Demographic Questionnaire	Male / Female	
Individual Parent Status	Conception of focal child	Original biological or adopted / Step parent	
Individual Perceived Parenting Role	Caregiver Role	Sole/Primary/Equal/ Secondary/Non-caregiver	
Family Formation Type	Child conceived prior to or after current relationship?	Original / Step	
Couple Sex	Demographic Questionnaire	Male / Female	
Couple Parenting Group	Caregiver Role	Egalitarian/ Primary-secondary/ Mismatched.	
Outcomes			
Individual Division of Labor	Who Does What		-4 to +4
Individual Parent-Child Relationship	Child-Parent Relationship Scale		0 to 4
Couple Division of Labor Egalitarianism	Who Does What		0 to 8
Couple Division of Labor Congruence	Who Does What	Egalitarian/ Primary-secondary/ Mismatched.	
Couple Difference in Parent-Child Relationship	Child-Parent Relationship Scale		0 to 4
Covariates			
Individual Race	Demographic Questionnaire	White / African American / Other	
Individual Education	Demographic Questionnaire	HS or Less/ Some College or Degree/ Post Graduate	
Individual Sex	Demographic Questionnaire	Male / Female	
Individual Age	Demographic Questionnaire		18+
Age of Focal Child	Demographic Questionnaire		0-18
Number of Children	Demographic Questionnaire		1-5 or more
Couple Race	Demographic Questionnaire	White / Minority, Mixed	
Couple Income-to-Needs	Demographic Questionnaire	Poor / Not Poor	
Couple Sex	Demographic Questionnaire	Male / Female	
Couple Average Age	Demographic Questionnaire		18+
Family Formation Type	Prior to or after relationship	Original / Step	
Parent Status		Original / Step	

Table 4. Individual Data Bivariate Correlations Among Central Variables and Covariates

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sex ^a	—						
2. Parent status ^b	.051	—					
3. Individual division of labor	-.034	.315**	—				
4. Parent-child relationship	-.117	.331**	.287**	—			
5. Age	.346**	.004	-.025	-.009	—		
6. Age of child ^c	-.059	-.116	-.022	-.312**	.143*	—	
7. Number of Children	-.008	.027	.103	.172**	-.038	-.047	—
Mean	.07	.74	.15	3.32	36.39	1.13	1.74
Standard deviation	.26	.44	.88	.57	7.79	.34	1.00
N	238	238	238	238	238	238	238

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

^a 0 = female, 1 = male. ^b 0 = step, 1 = original. ^c 1 = under twelve 2 = twelve to eighteen.

Table 5. Couple Data Bivariate Correlations Among Central Variables and Covariates

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Family formation ^a	—									
2. Couple sex ^b	.104	—								
3. Couple div of labor egalitarianism	-.171	-.163	—							
4. Couple div of labor congruence	-.122	-.097	.719**	—						
5. Difference p-c relationship	-.226*	-.105	.230*	.296**	—					
6. Couple race ^c	-.055	.057	-.072	-.094	.219*	—				
7. Income-to-needs ratio ^d	-.213	-.085	.025	-.038	.002	-.026	—			
8. Couple average age	.006	.339**	.007	.155	-.058	-.180	.089	—		
9. Age of child ^e	-.226*	-.105	.161	.187	.349**	-.056	.167	.148	—	
10. Number of Children	-.103	.008	.067	-.060	-.090	-.069	-.040	-.098	-.038	—
Mean	1.48	1.07	1.22	1.27	.53	1.24	.09	36.45	1.13	1.64
Standard deviation	.50	.26	1.25	.76	.47	.43	.28	7.19	.34	.96
N	86	86	86	86	86	86	70	86	86	86

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

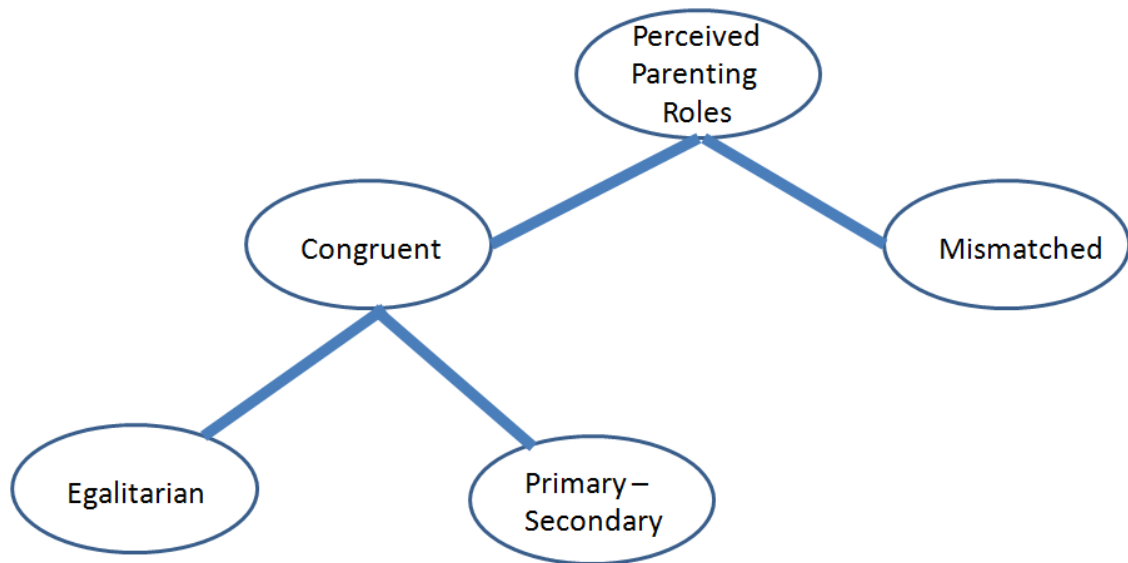
^a 1 = step, 2 = original. ^b 1 = female, 2 = male. ^c 1 = White, 2 = minority. ^d 0 = not poor, 1 = poor. ^e 1 = under twelve 2 = twelve to eighteen.

Table 6. Chi-Square, Hypothesis 2C

Couple Parenting Group		Couple Division of Labor Congruence		
		Egalitarian	Primary-Secondary	Mismatched
Egalitarian	Observed	28	3	11
	Expected	18.6	11.7	11.7
	Ratio Observed to Expected	1.51	.26	.09
Primary-Secondary	Observed	2	12	0
	Expected	6.2	3.9	3.9
	Ratio Observed to Expected	.32	3.08	0
Mismatched	Observed	8	9	13
	Expected	13.3	8.4	8.4
	Ratio Observed to Expected	.60	1.07	1.55

Ratios in bold on the diagonal show that observed occurrence of couples who are in the same classification by both parenting group and couple division of labor congruence scores range from 1.5 to 3 times greater than would be expected by chance. The cells where couples fall into different classifications on the two measures are at chance or less than chance levels.

APPENDIX B
CONGRUENCE AND EGALITARIANISM OF PARTNERS' PERCEIVED
PARENTING ROLES
FOR COUPLE PARENTING GROUPS



Determining Congruence:

- (1) Does P1's caregiver role self-assessment match P2's caregiver role other-assessment?
AND
 - (2) Does P1's caregiver role other assessment match P2's caregiver role self-assessment?
- If 1 AND 2 above are met, then the couple is Congruent.
 - If 1 AND 2 above are not met, then the couple is Mismatched.

A match is determined using the following information:

Potential Self and Other caregiver role assessments	
0	sole
1	primary
2	equal
3	secondary
4	non-caregiver

Rules for how congruence (matches) are determined for roles	
•	sole (0) can match with sole (0) or primary (1)
•	primary (1) can match with sole (0), primary (1), or equal (2)
•	equal (2) can match with primary (1) or equal (2)
•	secondary (3) can match with secondary (3) or non-caregiver (4)
•	non-caregiver (4) can match with secondary (3) or non-caregiver (4)

Determining Couple Parenting Group from Role Assessments				
For P1 self	For P1 other	For P2 self	For P2 other	
Most Common Egalitarian				
2 (equal)	2 (equal)	2 (equal)	2 (equal)	Partners agree that they are egalitarian
Other Scores That Are Egalitarian				
1 (primary)	1 (primary)	2 (equal)	2 (equal)	Partners agree that they are equal or equally primary
Any combination of 1s and 2s only				
Most Common Primary-Secondary				
1 (primary)	3 (secondary)	3 (secondary)	1 (primary)	Partners agree that one partner is primary caregiver and the other is secondary
3 (secondary)	1 (primary)	1 (primary)	3 (secondary)	
Other Scores That Are Primary-Secondary				
4 (non-caregiver)	1 (primary)	0 (sole)	4 (non-caregiver)	Partners agree that one parent is primary or sole caregiver and the other is secondary or non-caregiver
3 (secondary)	0 (sole)	0 (sole)	3 (secondary)	
0 (sole)	3 (secondary)	4 (non-caregiver)	0 (sole)	
Most Common Mismatched				
2 (equal)	2 (equal)	1 (primary)	3 (secondary)	One partner's view is equal/equal, the other's view is primary/secondary
3 (secondary)	1 (primary)	2 (equal)	2 (equal)	
Other Scores That Are Mismatched				
1 (primary)	3 (secondary)	2 (equal)	1 (primary)	Both view one partner as primary, but one

2 (equal)	1 (primary)	1 (primary)	3 (secondary)	partner views the second partner as equal and the other views the second partner as secondary
0 (sole)	3 (secondary)	2 (equal)	2 (equal)	No match

APPENDIX C

EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL COVARIATES

Individual Level Analyses

Covariate	IV (1B) Original/Step Parent	IV (2A,3A) Role	IV (3B) Sex	DV (1B,2A) Division of Labor	DV (3A,3B) Parent- Child Rel.
Race	p=. 277	p=.979	p=.534	p=.418	p=.624
Education	p=.004**	p=.550	p=.108	p=.469	p=.152
Sex	p=.436	p=.482	_____	p=.597	p=.071
Age	p=.952	p=.930	p<.001**	p=.696	p=.895
Age of Child	p=.074	p=.614	p=.366	p=.739	p<.001**
Number of Children	p=.900	p=.003**	p=.370	p=.517	p=.076
Original/Step Parent	_____	p<.001**	p=.436	p<.001**	p<.001**

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

Green fields were evaluated with Correlations

Blue fields were evaluated with Chi-square

Purple fields were evaluated with ANOVA

Hypothesis	Potential Covariate correlated or associated with IV	Potential Covariate correlated or associated with DV	Correlated or associated with both
1B	Education	Original/Step	None
2A	# children, Original/step	Original/Step	Original/Step
3A	# children, Original/step	Age of Child, Original/Step	Original/Step
3B	Age	Age of Child, Original/Step	None

Couple Level Analyses

Covariate	IV (1A) Original/ Step Family	IV (1C) Sex	IV (2B, 2C, 3C) Group	DV (1A, 1C, 2B) Couple Egal	DV (2C) Couple Congruence	DV (3C) Couple Difference CPRS
Race	p=.611	p=.598	p=.551	p=.507	p=.795	p=.043*
Income to Needs Ratio	p=.077	p=.485	p=.182	p=.839	p=.755	p=.987
Sex	p=.340	-----	p=.198	p=.133	p=.373	p=.334
Average Age	p=.956	p=.001**	p=.684	p=.948	p=.154	p=.593
Age of Child	p.036*	p=.337	p=.066	p=.140	p=.084	p=.001**
No. of Children	p=.286	p=.910	p=.591	p=.013*	p=.739	p=.866
Original/ Step Family	-----	p=.340	p=.040*	p=.114	p=.261	p=.037*

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

Green fields were evaluated with Correlations

Blue fields were evaluated with Chi-square

Purple fields were evaluated with ANOVA

Hypothesis	Potential Covariate correlated or associated with IV	Potential Covariate correlated or associated with DV	Correlated or associated with both
1A	Age of Child	Number of Children	None
1C	Couple Average Age	Number of Children	None
2B	Original/Step Family	Number of Children	None
2C	Original/Step Family	None	None
3C	Original/Step Family	Race, Age of Child, Original/Step Family	Original/Step Family